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Robert Pooler, Standards Division  
National Organic Program  
USDA-AMS-NOP  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Room 2642-S. Ag Stop 0268  
Washington, DC 20250-0268

RE: Docket: AMS-NOP-14-0079  
National Organic Program; Amendments to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances  
(Crops, Livestock and Handling)

Oregon Tilth would like to thank the National Organic Program (NOP) for the work they have done in updating the National Organic Standard List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Several changes are being moved forward as a part of this proposed rule, and Oregon Tilth is supportive of the majority of the modifications that provide clarity for organic integrity throughout the sector.

While we are largely in favor of the proposed changes, there are a few specific items that we are providing additional comment on, as outlined in the sections below:

#### **Addition of Zinc Sulfate to §205.603(a)**

This is an excellent example of the process working for the benefit of all stakeholders in the organic industry. Organic producers identified the need for the substance to be used as a health care product. The manufacturer of the substance petitioned it for that use, it was reviewed by the NOSB, and was recommended for addition to §205.603(a) because the NOSB determined that it met the criteria for use in organic livestock production as a topical health care product. The addition of zinc sulfate to the National List for use as a health care product provides clarity for certifiers and addresses a stated need for producers, and we fully support the proposed change.

#### **Revision of the Parasiticides Annotation on the listing at §205.603(a)**

Oregon Tilth is in support of the proposed rule change to amend the listing of parasiticides: Fenbendazole, Ivermectin and Moxidectin, under Section 205.603(a). We are also in support of the proposed rule action (under Table 14) allowing the emergency use of a parasiticide treatment of fiber-bearing animals without disqualifying the animal's fleece from organic production with one additional suggestion. This action will bring the NOP closer to international organic livestock regulations and re-energize the domestic organic wool market.

By allowing the emergency use of parasiticides, a US producer would be able to sell

organic wool from animals previously classified as breeding stock alone. More sheep producers would apply for organic certification, and the organic wool market in the US would begin to supply domestic textile production.

Our support notwithstanding, we request the NOP take a close look at the proposed language surrounding the withdrawal periods for the harvesting of fleece. Information and comment from the NOSB during the spring 2016 NOSB meeting indicate there was little to no evidence to warrant a withdrawal period of this length. In addition to shortening the proposed withdrawal period for milk, we would like the NOP to consider reviewing the withdrawal period for fleece and determine if it is also too lengthy based on the information available.

#### **Revision of the Methionine Annotation on the listing at §205.603(d)**

Oregon Tilth supports this change to the annotation as a simple way to improve animal welfare in organic poultry. We have provided public comment on multiple occasions on the topic of the existing methionine annotation and our support for revising the annotation, consistent with this proposed rule. In 2016, Oregon Tilth requested input from our poultry operations on the proposed revision to share at the spring NOSB meeting. Our poultry operations indicated that when a reduction in allowed amounts of methionine in organic poultry feed occurred in 2012, they experienced significant welfare problems as a result, including feather pecking and aggressive behavior in flocks. They anticipate this revision will reduce these issues, but still only provide for marginally adequate nutrition, which provides a strong incentive to continue work toward commercially available sources of non-synthetic methionine. They also did not express any concern over the additional recordkeeping requirements.

#### **Addition of Injectable Vitamins, Minerals and Electrolytes to §205.603(a)**

Oregon Tilth is supportive of this addition to the National List. Commonly used in livestock production, these materials face similar issues regarding the interpretation of how they may be allowed as seen with zinc sulfate. Adding these materials to the National List specifically for use as a health care product provides much-needed clarity to certifiers and organic livestock producers.

We do have a minor concern about the language in the annotation, "...restricted to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian." In reviewing the May 2009 NOSB meeting transcript on this topic, it appears this language was added to the annotation at the request of a single certifier and to address possible concerns from the FDA. It is not entirely clear whether this was considered necessary by the Board in order for the materials to be listed. Many of these products are available over-the-counter at local feed stores or through livestock service companies, and livestock producers commonly use them on an as-needed basis for animals that are often in urgent metabolic conditions such as milk fever. Requiring a veterinarian to administer these products, or to order their use, would require certified operations to have documentation of veterinary approval for these commonly used over-the-counter materials, which could be considered overly restrictive and burdensome. OTCO respectfully requests the NOP consider removing this requirement for veterinary oversight from the annotation for these materials.

#### **Addressing other concerns with the National List**

As previously stated, Oregon Tilth is strongly supportive of the NOP in addressing these outstanding National List recommendations. It benefits all organic stakeholders by providing additional clarity around the National List and ensuring that organic businesses can make informed decisions about the ingredients they use in their products, or the materials they use on their organic operations. We encourage the NOP to address the invalid listing of sodium nitrate on §205.601. It has been a source of confusion for many organic certifiers that this

material has been allowed to remain on the list after its sunset date, and that no action has been taken by the NOP to either renew the listing or remove it. Oregon Tilth requests that the NOP prioritize addressing this listing to provide clarity for certifiers and organic crop producers about the use of this material and ensure that the National List remains accurate.

Oregon Tilth thanks the National Organic Program for the opportunity to provide comment on this proposed rule, and for your commitment to furthering the growth and integrity of organic food and agriculture.

Respectfully submitted,  
Oregon Tilth

*Oregon Tilth is a leading certifier, educator and advocate for organic agriculture and products since 1974. Our mission to make our food system and agriculture biologically sound and socially equitable requires us to find practical ways to tackle big challenges. We advance this mission to balance the needs of people and planet through focus on core areas of certification, conservation, public health, policy and the marketplace.*